

Image of JUH showing staff and/or patients?

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## The Essential Building Blocks

KONBIT SANTE'S MISSION is to support the Haitian vision of a strong health system to improve the health of the people in northern Haiti. In Creole, a *konbit* refers to a traditional method of working together to till your friends' fields as well as your own. The people working together side by side as equals toward a common purpose, each contributing what they are able, form the *konbit*. *Sante* means health. The health of the Haitian people is our common purpose, and the *konbit* includes everyone with their "shoulder to the plow"- Haitian community groups, the Haitian government, US and international funders, and you, our supporters and volunteers.

How does our *konbit* help build a strong, sustainable health system? Like any structure, a health system needs

the right building blocks, including:

- Well-trained workers,
- Medicine, supplies and equipment,
- Infrastructure like safe buildings, clean water, and sanitation, and
- Quality health care services

Together with our partners, Konbit Sante improves these building blocks, so that Haiti can one day have a health system that really meets the needs of its people— from door-to-door community outreach all the way to hospital care. The goal is always to enhance the capacity of Haitians to provide care to their citizenry.

In this issue of our newsletter, we want to share with you the results of some of the work that has been done this year to improve these essential building blocks.

### Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Friends of Konbit Sante,

I am happy to share this update of the most recent progress to improve the health of the people of northern Haiti. Unfortunately, I must also tell you that we are ending our fiscal year with the largest fundraising shortfall in our 10 years of partnership; and we will finish the second year in a row with a significant budget deficit, in spite of the tremendous success of Maine Walks for Haiti.

Our work has continued and expanded in exciting ways with your help. I feel that we have kept faith with our partners in Haiti to work shoulder-to-shoulder on building the health system that they envision, as well as to you - our donors and supporters - by being good stewards of the resources that you have entrusted with us. We have worked hard to assure limited resources were used to address priority health issues and invested in areas that promise the greatest sustainable impact.

We have been a very "lean" mission-driven organization with low overhead, a small US staff, and a reliance on volunteer expertise and in-kind materials whenever possible. When people learn how small we actually are, they are often surprised by the scope and depth of our work. In Haiti I often hear, "you are a small organization with a big footprint." That is largely a reflection of the extraordinary people that have been involved in this konbit, both in Haiti and the US.

I am asking you to continue to support this work, and help us through these lean times. If you follow the news in Haiti, you are learning of many positive and hopeful transitions and change, proposed and actual, but transitions are always difficult and take time. The needs are great, and sometimes overwhelming. In this context, though, just a little investment can sometimes make a huge difference, and a collection of those investments at strategic points can begin to change the whole picture.

We are asking for your help to help us continue this journey... together.

Peace,  
Nate

## Well-trained workers

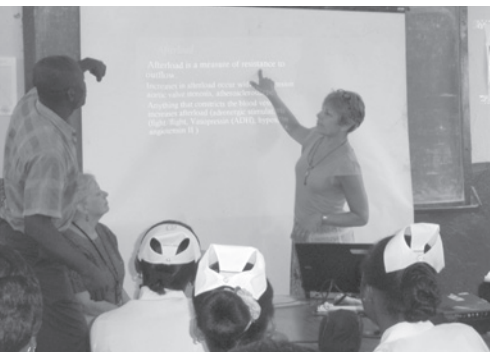


The majority of our US volunteers who travel to Haiti are skilled professionals

who have built strong relationships with counterparts in Haiti through regular visits. Every year since our founding over 10 years ago, volunteers have provided requested training and consultation and help in the planning of projects and initiatives that enable the Haitian staff to better serve their patients. So far this year, 12 doctors and nurses have been to Haiti to work together with their colleagues. The trainings were well received and resulted in lively discussion and requests for new topics to be addressed in the future.



Volunteer pediatrician Dr. Ann Lemire spent a week at Justinian Hospital in January working with the Haitian pediatricians with whom she partners. Here she demonstrates neurological developmental milestones in infants to first, second and third-year residents.



This winter nurse Kim Moody (shown standing) gave classes to nursing students and medical interns on hypertension and cardiac care.

## Medicine, Supplies and Equipment

### Supply shipment sent to Haiti



In early June Konbit Sante packed and sent off a 40-foot shipping container from our Maine warehouse space, donated by JB Brown and Sons.

We try to ship at least one container per year and this was the 14<sup>th</sup> in our 10-year history. Sending supplies to Haiti is an important and enormously satisfying part of our mission. The provision of supplies has tangible and immediate impact, because we work hard to assure what we send is what our partners need, whether it is essential medicines, an exam table, or medical textbooks. This winter, Ruddy Adeca, Konbit Sante's supply chain manager in Cap-Haitien, worked in Maine for two weeks, including visits to the warehouse, to help prepare and select items.

### Better Communication

Konbit Sante has long hoped to establish improved telecommunications capability between the US and Cap-Haitien for two reasons. The first is to allow the US and Haitian staff, volunteers, and partners to communicate easily with one another without traveling. The second, and more far-reaching motive, is that remote



Volunteers and staff work to fill every square foot of room in the container with needed supplies.

training through teleconferencing can occur between physicians or nurses from Maine or elsewhere, and residents and nursing students at Justinian Hospital. Konbit Sante recently purchased telecommunications hardware and installed a satellite connection. We hope that this will result in more frequent educational and collegial sharing for the people who travel, as well as the opportunity for broader involvement and contributions from people who are not able to travel. In addition, we have added a large conference room to our office on the campus of Justinian Hospital. This improved workspace for staff and volunteers also functions as a global classroom.

“For all our initiatives, the goal is never simply to come in and “fix a problem”, but rather to work closely with colleagues in Haiti to find solutions that meet their needs, and can ultimately be sustained by them.”

*Nate Nickerson, Konbit Sante Executive Director*

## Infrastructure

To fulfill its mission of quality care and education, Justinian Hospital needs

basic infrastructure that might be taken for granted in the US. Imagine a hospital without an adequate supply of clean water, or with an electrical system so unreliable that 75% of the medical equipment has been broken by voltage spikes and drops. Two recent projects have made significant progress in improving the care environment.



The 250-bed Justinian University Hospital, the second largest public hospital in Haiti, is where patients are referred for advanced care in northern Haiti. It is also a teaching hospital with over 130 medical residents and interns, and home of a major nursing school.

*Continued next page.*



### Clean water for Justinian Hospital

Thanks to a partnership with Rotary Clubs in Maine and New Hampshire and funding from Rotary International Foundation, we have significantly improved the water system at the hospital. Where there was once a single well that delivered the quantity of water that might have served a single US household, there are now three wells serving the hospital. Two wells have improved electrical pumping capacity, and one has a deep well manual pump for use when there is no power. New seamless pipes and a chlorine disinfection system prevent contamination. In addition, funds were used to stock a depot with the supplies necessary for the local staff to maintain the water system for the future.

### Improved electrical system

Two major fires have destroyed three buildings in the past 10 years. Early efforts of our volunteer team of engineers and electricians repaired the most dangerous electrical problems. We have also provided donated fire extinguishers and training. Nevertheless, the electrical wiring is so poor that it cannot support the basic medical equipment needed to test and treat patients, and fire remains a real risk. With grant funding from Chemonics and the USAID Office of Transitional Initiatives, a professional evaluation of the entire electrical distribution system of the hospital was just completed. The next step will be to



The electrical evaluation was a major step forward in the collaborative efforts between Konbit Sante and the hospital electricians, seen here reviewing the plans with volunteer and US board president Hugh Tozer.

find funding for the recommended improvements.

## Quality Health Care Services

### Addition of trauma services



After the 2010 earthquake the Israeli government donated and equipped a modular trauma facility at Justinian Hospital.

Although there were no funds to staff this critical care unit (CCU), a small team of dedicated Haitian doctors, residents and nurses stepped in to treat the most critically injured or ill patients that have come through the hospital ER, with support from Israeli nurse and Konbit Sante friend, Shirly Kahana, RN. Konbit Sante has recently established a partnership with Jewish Health International on education and consultation for the unit, while we work together with them and the Ministry of Health to find funding for its ongoing operation. The CCU demonstrated its value to the

hospital and the community in June when they managed the care of the most seriously injured of the 58 victims of a bus accident. The dramatic and successful response from the hospital wouldn't have been possible without the CCU and its staff.

### Better maternal and child services

In collaboration with Haiti Hospital Appeal and with funding from DRI and MaineLine, Konbit Sante has been working to improve care for pregnant women and children who have not had access to medical care because of distance, lack of transportation, cost, or other social and economic barriers. Under this program, nurses and medical residents drive to underserved areas to deliver care at community sites. The purpose of these clinics is not only to deliver care to neglected or hard to reach populations, but also to ensure that these people are referred to

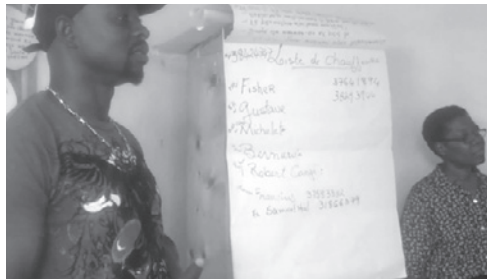


In the past year 450 pregnant women have received prenatal care services and over 500 children aged 0 to 5 have received pediatric care from the mobile clinics.

a health care facility for ongoing care. Another way that Konbit Sante is working to improve maternal and child health is by training traditional birth attendants (TBAs) to recognize the signs of pregnant women experiencing complications with childbirth. In Haiti the majority of births take place at home with the assistance of these TBAs, who are familiar members of the community and provide support during delivery at a cost that poor households can afford. However, TBAs are not trained or equipped to address medical emergencies and there is no reliable ambulance system. To address this situation, each TBA is provided a phone and is paired with at least two community members with cars. Since the start of this project in January 2011, over 20 maternal deaths or injuries have been avoided as a result of this project, and the TBAs are referring more mothers for care at skilled facilities.



ER specialist and volunteer Dr. John Saucier, seen here at a meeting with CCU staff, has been collaborating with his long time Haitian colleague and new CCU chief Dr. Kalil Turenne.



A volunteer community member is seen being trained to respond immediately to transport pregnant women to the nearest health center when an emergency occurs.

## 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Maine Walks with Haiti



Over 250 people participated in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual Maine Walks for Haiti on May 12<sup>th</sup>, which featured the addition of a timed 5K run. School teams, families, employee groups, and young and old all came out to enjoy the beautiful spring weather. We appreciate our sponsors and all of those who came out to support our largest annual fundraising event!

## Become a member of our supply chain

We invite your help as we launch a new initiative to acquire more of the medicines, equipment and supplies that are in constant need. Opportunities to redirect valuable items to Haiti arise when a medical facility closes or is renovated, biomedical equipment is replaced, or family members no longer require a wheelchair, crutches, or other medical aid. We invite you to become part of our supply chain initiative by contacting Danny Muller at (207) 347-6733 or [danny@konbitsante.org](mailto:danny@konbitsante.org). A list of urgently and always needed items can be found at <http://konbitsante.org/get-involved>.

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### May we send you occasional E-news?

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### We Welcome Your Comments:

[info@konbitsante.org](mailto:info@konbitsante.org)

## 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration in Haiti

On January 22nd, over 150 staff, partners, and government officials gathered in Cap-Haitien to celebrate Konbit Sante's partnership with the Haitian Ministry of Health and other local and international organizations. In-country Manager Dr. Youseline Telemaque focused on specific improvements to the health system that have resulted from the *konbit*. A program of singing and traditional Haitian dance rounded out the event.



## How You Can Help

Konbit Sante depends on the generous donations from individuals and organizations to fund our programs. Donations of cash, stocks, or in-kind items are greatly appreciated. For more information please visit our website at [www.konbitsante.org](http://www.konbitsante.org).

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(CAP-HAITIEN HEALTH PARTNERSHIP)

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